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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VE CO

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN-COLOMBIAN BOUNDARY DISPUTE

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN THE OPINION OF A VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTRY  
EXPERT, IT IS "IMPOSSIBLE" FOR THE GOV TO ACCEPT COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT'S

PROPOSAL FOR A CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF VENEZUELA END SUMMARY

1. ON AUG 15, GERMAIN GONZALEZ (PROTECT), SENIOR ADVISOR IN  
FOREIGN MINISTRY'S FRONTIERS DIVISION AND A LEADING AUTHORITY ON  
THE "DIFERENDO," GAVE EMBOFF HIS PERSONAL ASSESSMENT THAT CURRENT  
HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE GULF OF VENEZUELA WOULD ONLY BE  
"TALKS ABOUT TALKS". NOTING THAT THE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN  
MINISTER HAVE TRADITIONALLY MAINTAINED TIGHT PERSONAL CONTROL OVER  
GOV POLICY ON BOUNDARY ISSUE, GONZALEZ THOUGHT IT WOULD BE "IMPOSSIBLE"

FOR ANY VENEZUELAN GOVT TO ACCEPT PRESIDENT MICHELSEN'S PROPOSAL.

2. GONZALEZ EXPLAINED THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF VENEZUELAN BELIEVE  
THAT VENEZUELA'S PREVIOUS BOUNDARY TREATIES WITH COLOMBIA HAD  
ALREADY CONCEDED TOO MUCH. HE SAID THAT, IN FACT, THERE ARE THREE  
REQUESTS PENDING BEFORE THE VENEZUELAN SUPREME COURT TO DECLARE  
NULL AND VOID THE 1941 TREATY WITH COLOMBIA ON THE RIO DE ORO  
FRONTIER. (HE HOPED THAT THE COURT WOULD NOT RULE ON THESE CASES  
SINCE LITIGATION WOULD ONLY ADD TO THE CONTROVERSY).

GONZALEZ WAS AWARE THAT THERE WERE SIMILAR CRITICISMS BY COLOMBIANS  
THAT THEIR GOVT HAD CONCEDED TOO MUCH IN THE PAST, AND HE  
ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE TERRITORIAL WATERS QUESTION WAS OF  
POTENTIALLY GREATER ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE FOR COLOMBIA. NONETHELESS,  
NO VENEZUELAN POLITICIAN COULD SURVIVE IN OFFICE IF HE AGREED TO  
FURTHER TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS TO COLOMBIA. FURTHERMORE, ACCORDING  
TO GONZALEZ, IT WOULD BE "UNCONSTITUTIONAL" TO ACCEPT THE MICHELSEN  
PROPOSAL.

3. GONZALEZ, IN AN ALLUSION TO THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY'S  
OPPOSITION TO ANY CONCESSIONS, STATED THAT IT WAS ALSO "STRATEGICALLY  
UNTHINKABLE" FOR VENEZUELA TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY WITH ANOTHER

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POWER FOR THE GULF OF VENEZUELA. HE ADDED THAT COLOMBIAN NEGOTIATING PROPOSALS WOULD MAKE UNTENABLE VENEZUELA'S LINKS WITH ITS LOS MONJES ISLANDS. GONZALEZ CONCLUDED THAT THE "DIFERENDO" WOULD REMAIN A DEEPLY SENSITIVE AND EMOTIONAL ISSUE IN VENEZUELA FOR MANY YEARS.

4. WHEN EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT THE SANTA MARTA MEETING APPEARED TO PRODUCE SIGNIFICANT AGREEMENTS FOR BILATERAL COOPERATION, GONZALEZ SAID THAT VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA WERE "CONDEMNED TO HAVING GOOD RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER... THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE." THUS, HE FORESAW A CONTINUING EFFORT ON BOTH SIDES TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS WHERE POSSIBLE, BUT NO MOVEMENT ON THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE. SHLAUDEMAN

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